

Dear Senator or Representative:

What do students at Cascade View Elementary School in Tukwila, John Stanford International School in Seattle, and Meeker Middle School in Kent have in common? They are benefiting from an intentional focus on a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum delivered in the classroom or in expanded learning opportunities offered after school and during the summer.

A proviso in the state House budget calls for continuation of the Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks Workgroup to dig deeper into making these SEL Standards culturally responsive and useful indicators that will help improve student outcomes, enhance school and classroom climate, and address discipline issues.

We urge the House and the Senate to support this proviso in the FY 2018 budget.

Social-emotional learning is a process through which people build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and in life.

In 2015, the Washington State Legislature directed OSPI to convene a Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks Workgroup to provide recommendations for a framework and foundation for effective SEL programming. While the workgroup has made great headway in identifying six standards for our state, we know that the work is not complete.

At the John Stanford International School in Seattle, Dan Turner, a school counselor, discovered that a dual focus on academics and social-emotional learning has helped create a culture where students know that school is not just about reading, writing, math, and language, but also building relationships with other people and fostering the ability to feel empathy and compassion.

Anne Marie Littleton, a social worker at Cascade View Elementary School in Tukwila, saw results immediately upon implementing an SEL curriculum. She especially noticed that her students now have more coping tools when dealing with strong emotions. And, The Afterschool All Stars program at Meeker Middle School in Kent complements the school day by creating a fun, safe environment where students gain academic and social-emotional skills while engaging in hands-on opportunities.

A growing body of research tells us that today's children and youth need opportunities both in and out of school to develop social-emotional skills so they can thrive and be prepared for productive careers. In the largest SEL study ever done, school-based SEL programs were shown to improve students' ability to get along with others and their bond to their schools, while reducing absences, negative behaviors, anxiety, and stress. This review of 213 research studies, including more than 270,000 kindergarten through high school students, showed that SEL programs increased overall academic achievement by 11 percentile points.

The outcomes we see in youth who have benefited from social-emotional learning not only include school success, but the ability to meet many of the employability needs identified by business leaders. SEL curricula delivered in school and through expanded learning opportunities provide a key to workforce development by explicitly teaching the social and emotional skills employers are seeking and the U.S. economy needs.

As the Legislature works to finalize the budget, **we urge inclusion of funding to continue work on social-emotional learning opportunities that build skills critical for success in school and beyond in the 21st century.**

Sincerely,

Joan Cole Duffell
Executive Director
Committee for Children